

- A Page of Interesting Short Stories

The Magic of a Woman's Love

By Elsie Endicott

THE happy voices of children, as they played around an old cider press, where the older people were engaged in crushing apples, came to the ears of Dave Thornton as he turned his runabout from the white road of the valley to climb Roan mountain to the pretty little stone lodge he had visited every fall for five years.

Some day they, too, would be rudely disillusioned about life, as he had been, thought Dave. But none of his own gloomy thoughts were reflected in the scene about him. The mellow fragrance of late autumn was in the air and here and there a patch of crimson, the result of an early frost, gleamed against the green of the trees. To the left, in the valley, an acre of golden rod rippled in the breeze, like a field of grain ready for the harvest. The whistle of a bobwhite, calling sweet and clear, sounded from a nearby cornfield, where pumpkins lay yellow in the sunlight. A trumpet vine spilled its scarlet bloom riotously over

the oak trees by the road. He was going back against his will and better judgment. Five years before he had built the little white lodge and furnished it out of his store of treasures, picked up on his travels all over the world. They had planned to spend their honeymoon there—he and Carolyn Maynard. But fate, in the person of another man, had intervened and Carolyn had left him and married a young ambassador who had taken her abroad immediately. Dave had pined over the old wound every year by going back and living over again his old love affair. Now he was going back to pack up a few of his things, for he had planned to sell the place to Ednae Boynton, a young girl who was beginning to sell short stories to the magazines. He had met her at a little studio tea and had come to like her well enough to sell her his little house of dreams, the dreams that had never come true for him. She was coming up the next day to look it over.

When Dave was half a mile away, he looked up and saw the lodge like a little white flower opening out of a green calyx. Smoke curled lazily from the chimney. Evidently the caretaker was ready for him. As he stepped on the rustic porch he saw a merry little fire of black Jack logs crackling on the old brass andirons that had been his mother's. A rough basket of wild flowers hung outside the door. Within gay pillows gave a festive air to his worn old leather couch and he saw a whole dropped carelessly in the corner. A Chinese tea set that he had picked up in Canton was on a wagonette and a little blue flame burned under the kettle. He stood in the doorway, a little amazed, wondering if his eyes did not deceive him. Many times he had pictured the little house like that, warm and intimate and cozy.

"Possession," said Ednae Boynton, dressed in a dull blue smock that half hid, half revealed the curves of her young body as she came to meet him.

"Is nine points of the law. Mother and I have moved in. Truthfully, we are stopping at the hotel on top of the mountain, but I could not resist running down here and getting things all homelike for you. Like it?" she asked, smiling at his expression. "So much that I can't think of selling the place now." Suddenly a little pulse in his throat began to hammer with painful insistence. He wanted to take her in his arms and kiss her where her shining black hair waved back from her high white forehead. She had always felt that she attracted him powerfully, but a burned child dreads the fire, and having been fooled by one woman had made him wary of the sex. Seeing Ednae Boynton against the background of his little house of dreams that had flowered into a real home under the magic touch of her deft fingers made him realize that he had fallen in love again, hopelessly, happily in love with the little story writer. He had believed that romance had died

out of the world for him, but love can be born in the moon of falling blossoms as well as in the springtime of life. "Are you going to make me sorry that I came? It will be such a disappointment not to stay here—" She turned away, her lips quivering. "Do you think that you can write stories—love stories—up here?" She smiled then and looked up at him. "There is one disease that people never acknowledge," she told him. "Writers never admit that they can't write anything they attempt to produce. The disease is fatal. One never recovers. Won't you have some tea," she asked, hospitably, "in your own house?" He turned and took both her fluttering little hands in his own. "If you will promise to be partners and own half the house and—all of me!" he answered. He drew her into his arms, and at the touch of her yielding young body all the old doubt and misgivings disappeared like magic and a

happiness greater than he had ever known flooded his heart. She had taken his cold, empty little house and opened the windows to the sunshine of love, lifting it with dreams, rosy dreams, the dreams that must inevitably come true, "I love you," he whispered passionately, "I love you, dear." Outside a bird called a tender little mating note, and the answer came soft and sweet from a contented heart. There were steps on the porch and through the door came a vision that Dave thought could not be real. Carolyn Maynard, in the pale gray of widowhood, was smiling at him. He went forward to meet her, his arm still around the little story writer. Even as he greeted her, this woman who had once thrilled him, he wondered how her coming would affect him, but his pulse, save when he looked at the wandering Ednae, was just as steady as usual. He might have been greeting any chance acquaintance. He was conscious that Carolyn looked rather

old, a trifle blasé, and her complexion known faded his heart. She had been made up too much for beauty. He found himself critically comparing her love, lifting it with dreams, rosy dreams, the dreams that must inevitably come true, "I love you," he whispered passionately, "I love you, dear." Outside a bird called a tender little mating note, and the answer came soft and sweet from a contented heart. There were steps on the porch and through the door came a vision that Dave thought could not be real. Carolyn Maynard, in the pale gray of widowhood, was smiling at him. He went forward to meet her, his arm still around the little story writer. Even as he greeted her, this woman who had once thrilled him, he wondered how her coming would affect him, but his pulse, save when he looked at the wandering Ednae, was just as steady as usual. He might have been greeting any chance acquaintance. He was conscious that Carolyn looked rather

Resurrecting Happiness

By Phil Moore

WHEN Miss Jessup, breathless with haste, rushed in to tell her she had just heard over the telephone that Jessamy West was dead, Harriet Hall was quietly painting some china.

"Dead!" Harriet cried. She sat, gripping her hands together, staring at Miss Jessup, her face as white as her little ruffled apron.

Through her mind raced a picture of lovely Jessamy West, rosy, full-bodied, laughing. Ten days before they had been partners at a game of bridge. "Dead!" she repeated faintly. "Oh, Miss Jessup, it can't be true!"

"I guess it is, all right," Miss Jessup said, grimly. "The doctor told her when the children came down with diphtheria and they quarantined the house that she better stay away from them. The disease always goes hard with full-throated folks. But she laughed at him. And now she's dead and poor Norman is almost crazy. The children, however, are getting better,

they say." Still Harriet could not believe it. But she had to when she heard the news confirmed. Jessamy West was really dead and her home was made desolate.

It was nearly a month later that Harriet met Norman walking with his two children. He looked pale and forlorn. She stopped to talk to him.

"It was a fearful blow, Harriet," he said. "Seems like I should never recover. But I have my boy and girl left, thank God! Mrs. Barry is keeping house for us. It was the best I could do. My business is in bad shape, and it takes all my time to attend to it."

Harriet thought as they parted. "That fat, slow, mussy old woman. These poor babies! And poor Norman. She walked on with her head down and never saw the Rev. Thomas Brooks, pastor of fashionable Christ Church, who gazed at her from the other side of the street. It was known to every body in Canton that Harriet

Hall could have the Rev. Thomas Brooks for the lifting of a finger. It was not known why she did not have him. That was Harriet's secret and she kept it as religiously as she kept Sunday. Even Miss Jessup, who knew everything, did not know that.

Harriet loved Norman West. It had begun in their school days. She never had any reason for loving him, but she did, so strangely and perversely as women made. Three different men she refused because of him, and now she was about to refuse another. She never expected to marry Norman, but she could not marry anybody else. And she was all of thirty years old.

The strange, and occurrence kept Canton talking for a long time. Miss Jessup had a great deal to say about it to Harriet. "The best thing Norman can do is to get married again quick as ever he can. Of course, I know he's poor and in debt, but seem like some woman ought to take pity on him. He's a fine man, Norman West

is. I've been trying to get Allie Hitt to go after him, but she says she was not cut out to be a second wife. I dunno. I hope when he does marry he won't get some little snippy young piece that'll misuse the children. They are darlings, both of 'em."

"Yes, they are," Harriet replied. "Margaret is just like her father and Francis is the image of Jessamy." She changed the subject, but it did not leave her mind.

And so months went by. Mrs. Barry stayed on and Miss Jessup said that the house was becoming a pigpen. But what better could Norman do? Spring came, and summer, and then fall again. Jessamy had been dead a year, Norman looked like despair itself and the children began to show the neglect. The misfortunes of the Wests were on every tongue.

One day at sunset Harriet picked Norman up in the car as he was returning from work. He looked shabby, thin, pitiful.

"I'm really not fit to get in beside you, Harriet!" he said wistfully. "Nonsense!" Harriet retorted. She looked fresh and brilliant in her brown, fur-trimmed coat and velvet hat. It was snappy weather and her cheeks glowed. Norman West dare not look at her and she knew it.

There was satisfaction in the knowledge. "Norman," she said, laughing. "What would you think of a woman who proposed to a man?"

"I would think he was a pretty poor stick of a man who'd put her in the corner where she'd have to do it. He wouldn't be worth proposing to, Harriet, now, would he?" Harriet laughed again. "Oh, I don't know. That depends. Maybe he was timid or something, and maybe she saw her happiness going and felt bound to save it if she could."

"I wouldn't let a woman propose to me, Harriet," Norman sighed.

"Wouldn't you?" retorted Harriet. "Then please propose to me quick and

save me the trouble, Norman." "Harriet!" he cried. "You wouldn't—you couldn't—Oh, Harriet, you'd not stoop to marry me!"

"It wouldn't be stooping to marry you, Norman," she answered quietly. So they were engaged. And two weeks later they went to the Methodist parsonage and were married. Harriet's friends would have made her a wedding, but she declined. As for the Rev. Thomas Brooks, the day he heard she was going to marry Norman West he demanded a vacation on account of his health and went away and stayed until it was all over.

Harriet took the Wests to her own home, where her housekeeper's cooking soon restored the roses to the neglected children's cheeks. In no time also people began to look at Norman West with amazement. He seemed to have undergone a mental and spiritual change. He never had been accounted a business success, but suddenly he was making his townsmen

take notice of him. "Harriet didn't do so badly, after all," they said. Harriet had done far from badly. She made Norman the man he always should have been. He grew stout, rosy, light-hearted. He paid off his debts without help from her, and became such a prodigious money maker that folks gasped at his success.

"I wonder if you're as happy as you've made me, Harriet," he said to her one day.

Harriet smiled. "You do act happy, Norman. I'm flattered, I must be a success as a second wife. Not many women are." He took her in his arms. "Dear, if you hadn't been so rich you'd have been my first wife. I wanted you all the time, but I didn't dare ask you."

"Oh!" commented Harriet. She rubbed her cheek against his and laughed a little. "Do you know, honey, I knew that all the time," she said softly.

One Woman and Another

By Abner Anthony

EVERYONE in Westmore liked May Hammond and Olive Hibbs, who were friends as well as cousins, besides being extremely young wives, and when old Miss Appleby, their aunt, died and left each of them \$7,000, everybody in town felt a thrill of interest.

They had only been married a year, and had just lately got to housekeeping in neighboring dwellings on Park street. Olive was living in Jim's old home, which had come to him from his mother—a small, gray house, rather shabby now, but which Jim hoped to fix up after he got to earning more. Olive had just the necessary house-keeping things, but they were comfortable. May, too, lived in an old house, one which Will had bought cheap at a time when real estate was down. As May said laughingly, they merely considered themselves squatters, waiting

for the time when they could afford to get rid of the old house and build a new one. The \$7,000 arriving unexpectedly to the two girls, sent them into a great flurry of excitement.

"I don't have to think for one moment what I shall do with my money," May said. "I shall have a new house."

"What will you do with the old one?" Olive asked.

"Tear it down. It isn't worth much. But the lot is lovely. And I know exactly the kind of house I want—like Stewart Gibson's over there."

"But that's such a big house just for two people!" Olive exclaimed. "I like big houses. I shall have it a little nicer than Gibson's some ways. I've got the ideas all in my head about the fireplace and the butler's pantry and the porches—" She broke off, laughing. "But there, I've not asked yet what you are going to do

with your money?" "I don't know what I shall do with it, May. I'm going to talk it over with Jim. I've just got a faint idea—" But May was staring out of the window at the Gibson house across the street. "I don't really like the shape of that balcony," she said. "Do you, Olive?"

"No," replied Olive. "I don't. It looks too much like a swallow's nest!" May screamed. "What an idea! A swallow's nest!" She was hilariously happy.

After May's departure Olive went all over the house from top to bottom. It had been Jim's boyhood home and she loved it for his sake as well as for her own. In it she had had the happiest year of her life. Her hand caressed the railing of the narrow stairway. "Dear old house!" she murmured.

"I couldn't have it torn down for the sake of building a new house upon its site—" She caught her breath as an inspiration came. Down she sat upon the stairs, and there she was when Jim came whistling in through the front door to supper.

"Well," he said, "I just walked up with Will. He says May is going to build a new house with her money."

"Is he glad?" "Oh, sure! Will likes to make a show. He says if there's anything left after the house they're going to get a runabout. Now I should begin with the runabout—" He stopped—"If it was my money," he ended embarrassedly.

Olive had her hands on his shoulders. "It is yours just as much as if it were left to you outright, dear," she said. "Aren't we partners in the joys and sorrows and good fortunes of

each? Jim, May's been over and we've been talking. She's wild about having a new house. But I like this old house better than any we could build."

Jim's dark, earnest face lit up. "That pleases me," he said. "You know I'm fond of this house, Olive, I can't help being. I'd hate to give it up—" "We aren't going to," Olive interrupted. "Now listen to me."

"And you're going to stay in this old house!" May said a few days later. She and Will were boarding while their new house was in course of construction. "Just wait till you see my new domicile, Olive. You'll wish for one yourself, then."

Olive shook her head. "No, Jim and I are content with this house."

"But aren't you going to spend your money?" "Most of it."

"But how?" "Just wait and see."

Presently not only May, but all Westmore, saw. Paint, paper, a changed partition or two, a bathroom, a fireplace and a porch transformed the old house. Besides all this, there were new rugs, easy chairs, a talking machine, new curtains, books, and a hundred other beautiful and comforting new things. A little work turned the barn into a garage and one morning a new five-passenger car took up its station there, for, said Olive, "I shan't be selfish!" There was still a goodly rainy day sum left to draw interest and yield an income.

Across the street May's new house came to maturity. It was very fine, but May began to look worried.

"It's going to take a lot of furniture," she said. "Well, some of the rooms will have to wait." She laugh-

ed uneasily. "I guess Will and I shall have to ride in your car this summer. Olive, if we go about at all. Every cent has gone into the house. There's nothing left for a runabout."

"It's a lovely house," Olive said. "So is yours."

"It's comfy. It's home," May sighed.

"Don't you tell Will or Jim, either of them—don't you tell anybody, Olive—but do you know sometimes I wish I'd done as you did?" "Oh, please!" laughed Olive consolingly.

But after May had gone back to the handsome house across the street, Olive sat by the fire thinking. As she thought her glance moved about the simple, graceful, cozy living room, at the books and music and good pictures that had come out of her legacy. She drew a deep breath of contentment.

Nor Fame Nor Fortune

By Joella Johnson

WHAT is more natural than for a girl to desire a career, especially if she is just 18 and possesses a generous share of intelligence, ambition and good looks? And, be it known, Allison Kent possessed the qualifications.

True, she was only a country school teacher, but she reasoned that everyone must start at the bottom of the ladder and climb rung after rung to the very top. Why, of course, it would be hard work, but it was worth the struggle, for the topmost rung meant fame. Ambition whispered that she could achieve this.

I have mentioned before that this country school teacher possessed a generous share of good looks. Strange to say, it was this fact that started trouble at the very beginning of her career. Yes, she had brains and ambition, too, but to the masculine mind they are of secondary importance—

good looks come first.

Perhaps that will explain why John Graham, the most popular young man in the village, failed entirely to remember the text the first Sunday this little gray-eyed teacher attended church. His mother told us this herself. She said it had not happened before in years. John always prided himself on knowing something about the sermon when they talked it over during the course of the noonday meal. That day, however, his mind was a blank so far as the subject under discussion was concerned.

This young man had dreams, too. Ambition had long been whispering in his ear to leave the little country village and go out into the world where he could make a name for himself. John wanted to amass a fortune—he liked the sound of the word—and Allison said he could do it.

Of course everything would have a career. But in the end she always

gone along smoothly if these two young people had only listened to the sober counsels of ambition, but just about that time another voice began to whisper to them about a radiant future where neither fame nor wealth mattered in the least. At such times John would see a little white cottage with vines growing over the door, and always in the open doorway he would catch a glimpse of a certain young lady with gray eyes, wavy brown hair and a most adorable smile, which invariably made his heart beat faster. Yes, it is a fact that this little teacher's good looks played the mischief with John and his plans for the future.

And Allison Kent? Why, sometimes the ladder of fame seemed to her desperately high and hard to climb, and often she wondered if making a home could be called a career. But in the end she always

put these thoughts away from her as unworthy the loftier aims of ambition. Then one day John heard of a place in the far West where golden opportunities awaited young men of purpose and character, and he decided to go.

It was when he was bidding Allison good-by that the vine-covered cottage dream came to him again, and, acting on a sudden impulse, the next moment he was telling her all about it. Would she be willing to start life with him in such a humble home? Would she wait for him? Then suddenly he stopped, abashed at what he had done.

With flushed cheeks the girl told him of her career, and the ladder of fame she must climb. No, she couldn't promise. They could be friends, though—good friends—but nothing more. She was right, of course, John reasoned. Then he determined answ-

to amass a fortune, and some day, after she had won fame, he would lay his wealth at her feet. Yes, he would wait until he could offer her a mansion instead of a vine-covered cottage.

In the days that followed letters passed between the two occasionally, but it was five years before they met again, in an Eastern city. Here they spent several happy days in each other's company, and their friendship deepened, but they parted, again just "good friends" for the young man's fortune was not yet made.

Again she years slipped quickly away and at last it seemed as if John's dream of wealth was to be realized. One day he received a letter from Allison telling him that she had secured a much coveted position in a city school. After this message he applied himself to his business with renewed energy. Mansions, gray eyes and a wonderful smile were being mingled in his

day dreams when—the crash came! Unexpected business reverses had swept away nearly half of his fortune.

John aged perceptibly in those days. Feeling the need of a change, and desirous of seeing his loved ones, he took a trip to his old home. Allison often visited his people, and here they met again. 'Twas plain to see that they were happiest when in each other's company, and why they were only "good friends" was a puzzle hard to solve. No one knew of the ladder of fame, and John's dream of wealth to lay at her feet.

It was the last night of Allison's visit that, in answer to some question she had asked, he thoughtlessly told of his loss. And then, before he realized it, he was pouring into her ears the story of his struggle to amass a fortune—for her. When he had fin-

ished, he buried his face in his hands—ashamed of his weakness.

But Allison was speaking. "I'm so glad you've told me. I feared you wouldn't," he heard her saying, in a voice that thrilled him.

Then his hands were drawn gently away from his face, and he looked straight into a pair of tender gray eyes.

"Oh, John," she cried, "have you never guessed that it is I who am climbing the ladder of fame? Have you never read heart-breaking work a tune—alone?"

She hesitated a moment, voice in which sobs and tears mingled, exclaimed: "Can't you see? Will you understand? Oh, blind boy, I don't want wealth or fame; I want that vine-covered cottage—and you."